



DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

SECRET - EYES ONLY

November 6, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. McGEORGE BUNDY  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Letter to the President  
from Chairman Khrushchev,  
dated October 24, 1962

I am enclosing herewith the signed original and an official translation of Chairman Khrushchev's letter to the President dated October 24. A translation prepared by the Embassy in Moscow was forwarded via Moscow's telegram No. 1070.

*T. T. ROGERS*  
William H. Brubeck  
Executive Secretary

Enclosures:

1. Signed original of letter  
to the President from  
Khrushchev, dated October 24.
2. Official translation.

SECRET - EYES ONLY

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 11652, Secs 3(E) and 5(D) or (E)  
By *[Signature]* NARS, Date *11/29/74*

~~SECRET~~

This document consists of 7  
page No. 3 of 4 copies.  
Series A.

46234  
T-94/T-24  
Russian

[Embossed Seal of the USSR]

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR

Moscow, October 24, 1962

Mr. Ambassador:

Enclosed herewith is a letter from N. S. Khrushchev, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, to John F. Kennedy, President of the United States of America.

It is requested that this letter be transmitted to the President without delay.

Sincerely yours

[s] Smirnovski

Officer in Charge of USA Bureau  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, USSR

Enclosure: Letter from the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR to the President of the United States.

Mr. Foy D. Kohler,

Ambassador of the United States of America,

Moscow.

DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 11652, Sec. 1, and 5(D) or (E)  
By                      on 10/29/74

[Embossed Seal of the USSR]

Dear Mr. President:

I have received your letter of October 23, have studied it, and am answering you.

Just imagine, Mr. President, that we had presented you with the conditions of an ultimatum which you have presented us by your action. How would you have reacted to this? I think that you would have been indignant at such a step on our part. And this would have been understandable to us.

In presenting us with these conditions, you, Mr. President, have flung a challenge at us. Who asked you to do this? By what right did you do this? Our ties with the Republic of Cuba, like our relations with other states, regardless of what kind of states they may be, concern only the two countries between which these relations exist. And if we now speak of the quarantine to which your letter refers, a quarantine may be established, according to accepted international practice, only by agreement of states between themselves, and not by some third party. Quarantines exist, for example, on agricultural goods and products. But in this case the question is in no way one of quarantine, but rather of far more serious things, and you yourself understand this.

You, Mr. President, are not declaring a quarantine, but rather are setting forth an ultimatum and threatening that if we do not give in to your demands you will use force. Consider what you are saying! And you want to persuade me to agree to this! What would it mean to agree to these demands? It would mean guiding oneself in one's relations with other countries not by reason, but by submitting to arbitrariness. You are no longer appealing to reason, but wish to intimidate us.

No, Mr. President, I cannot agree to this, and I think that in your own heart you recognize that I am correct. I am convinced that in my place you would act the same way.

Reference to the decision of the Organization of American States cannot in any way substantiate the demands now advanced by the United States. This

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DECLASSIFIED  
E.O. 11652, Sec. 1.1 and 5(d) or (E)  
By *[Signature]* Date *12/29/74*

*[Signature]* 11/15/62  
~~SECRET~~

...when you have presented us by your action. How would you have reacted to this? I think that you would have been indignant at such a step on our part. And this would have been understandable to us.

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His Excellency

John F. Kennedy,

President of the United States of America,  
Washington.

Organization

DECLASSIFIED

EO 11652, Sec. 3(c) and 5

EX-11652, Sec. 3(c) and 5

SECRET

Organization has absolutely no authority or basis for adopting decisions such as the one you speak of in your letter. Therefore, we do not recognize these decisions. International law exists and universally recognized norms of conduct exist. We firmly adhere to the principles of international law and observe strictly the norms which regulate navigation on the high seas, in international waters. We observe these norms and enjoy the rights recognized by all states.

You wish to compel us to renounce the rights that every sovereign state enjoys, you are trying to legislate in questions of international law, and you are violating the universally accepted norms of that law. And you are doing all this not only out of hatred for the Cuban people and its government, but also because of considerations of the election campaign in the United States. What morality, what law can justify such an approach by the American Government to international affairs? No such morality or law can be found, because the actions of the United States with regard to Cuba constitute outright banditry or, if you like, the folly of degenerate imperialism. Unfortunately, such folly can bring grave suffering to the peoples of all countries, and to no lesser degree to the American people themselves, since the United States has completely lost its former isolation with the advent of modern types of armament.

Therefore, Mr. President, if you coolly weigh the situation which has developed, not giving way to passions, you will understand that the Soviet Union cannot fail to reject the arbitrary demands of the United States. When you confront us with such conditions, try to put yourself in our place and consider how the United States would react to these conditions. I do not doubt that if someone attempted to dictate similar conditions to you--the United States--you would reject such an attempt. And we also say--no.

The Soviet government considers that the violation of the freedom to use international waters and international air space is an act of aggression which pushes mankind toward the abyss of a world nuclear-missile war. Therefore, the Soviet Government cannot instruct the captains of Soviet vessels

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bound for Cuba to observe the orders of American naval forces blockading that Island. Our instructions to Soviet mariners are to observe strictly the universally accepted norms of navigation in international waters and not to retreat one step from them. And if the American side violates these rules, it must realize what responsibility will rest upon it in that case. Naturally we will not simply be bystanders with regard to piratical acts by American ships on the high seas. We will then be forced on our part to take the measures we consider necessary and adequate in order to protect our rights. We have everything necessary to do so.

Respectfully,

[s] N. Khrushchev

N. Khrushchev

Moscow

October 24, 1962



**TRANSLATION FOLLOWS**

13 (6)

INCOMING TELEGRAM

Department of State

M  
Action

SS  
Info

Control: 17500  
Rec'd: OCTOBER 24, 1962  
2:34 PM

FROM: MOSCOW

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 1070, OCTOBER 25, 2 AM

NIAC

POLICY

EYES ONLY

FOLLOWING IS EMBASSY'S TRANSLATION LETTER FROM AMBASSADOR  
TO PRESIDENT RECEIVED BY MESSENGER FROM FOREIGN OFFICE AT  
11:30 PM MOSCOW TIME.

BEGIN TEXT

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I HAVE RECEIVED YOUR LETTER OF OCTOBER 23, FAMILIARIZED MYSELF  
WITH IT AND AM ANSWERING YOU.

IMAGINE, MR. PRESIDENT, THAT WE HAD POSED TO YOU THESE ULTIMATIVE  
CONDITIONS WHICH YOU HAVE POSED TO US BY YOUR ACTION. HOW  
WOULD YOU HAVE REACTED TO THIS? I THINK THAT YOU WOULD HAVE  
BEEN INDIGNANT AT SUCH A STEP ON OUR PART. AND THAT WOULD HAVE  
BEEN COMPREHENSIBLE TO US.

HAVING POSED THESE CONDITIONS TO US, YOU, MR. PRESIDENT, HAVE  
CHALLENGED US. WHO ASKED YOU TO DO THIS? BY WHAT RIGHT HAVE  
YOU DONE THIS? OUR RELATIONS WITH THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA, LIKE  
OUR RELATIONS WITH OTHER STATES, REGARDLESS OF WHAT SORT OF STATE  
IT MAY BE, CONCERN ONLY THE TWO COUNTRIES BETWEEN WHICH THOSE  
RELATIONS EXIST. AND IF ONE IS REALLY GOING TO TALK ABOUT

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PB

-2- 1970, OCTOBER 28, 10 AM FROM 111A

A QUARANTINE, REFERRED TO IN YOUR LETTER, IT CAN BE ESTABLISHED, ACCORDING TO ACCEPTED INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE, ONLY BY THE AGREEMENT OF STATES BETWEEN THEMSELVES, AND NOT BY A DECISION OF A THIRD PARTY. THERE EXIST, FOR EXAMPLE, QUARANTINES IN AGRICULTURAL DISEASES AND PESTS. BUT ON THE BASIS AT HAND, THE QUESTION IS IN NO WAY ONE OF QUARANTINE, BUT RATHER OF OUR MORE DIFFICILE THINGS, AND OF OUR BETTER UNDERSTANDING THEM.

YOU, MR. PRESIDENT, ARE NOT DECLARING QUARANTINES, BUT ADVANCING AN ULTIMATUM AND THREATENING THAT UNLESS WE GIVE IN TO THE DEMANDS OF YOUR DEMANDS, YOU WILL "DEFEAT". CONSIDER WHAT YOU ARE SAYING! AND YOU WISH TO CONVINCE US TO AGREE TO THIS! WHAT DOES AGREEMENT WITH SUCH DEMANDS MEAN? THIS WOULD LEAD US TO GUIDE OURSELVES IN OUR RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES NOT BY REASON, BUT TO ENGAGE ARGUMENTS. YOU ARE NO LONGER APPEALING TO REASON, BUT WISH TO ULTIMATE US.

AND, MR. PRESIDENT, I CANNOT AGREE WITH THIS AND THINK THAT IN YOUR HEART YOU RECOGNIZE THAT I AM CORRECT. I AM CONVINCED THAT IN MY PLACE YOU WOULD ACT THE SAME WAY.

REFERENCE TO THE DECISION OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES CANNOT IN ANY WAY SUBSTANTIATE THE DEMANDS NOW ADVANCED BY THE UNITED STATES. THIS ORGANIZATION HAS ABSOLUTELY NO AUTHORITY OR BASIS TO MAKE DECISIONS LIKE THAT OF WHICH YOU SPEAK IN YOUR LETTER.

CONSEQUENTLY, WE DO NOT RECOGNIZE THESE DECISIONS. INTERNATIONAL LAW EXISTS, GENERALLY RECOGNIZED NORMS OF CONDUCT EXIST. WE FIRMLY SUPPORT THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, STRICTLY OBSERVE THE NORMS REGULATING NAVIGATION ON THE HIGH SEAS AND IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS. WE RESERVE THESE NORMS AND ENJOY THE RIGHTS RECOGNIZED BY ALL STATES.

YOU WISH TO COMPEL US TO RENOUNCE THE RIGHTS THAT EVERY SOVEREIGN STATE ENJOYS, YOU ARE ATTEMPTING TO LEGISLATE IN QUESTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, YOU ARE TRAMPLING UPON THE

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-3- 1970, OCTOBER 25, 2 AM FROM MOSCOW

GENERALLY ACCEPTED NORMS OF THIS LAW. AND ALL THIS NOT ONLY OUT OF HATRED FOR THE CUBAN PEOPLE AND ITS GOVERNMENT, BUT ALSO AS A RESULT OF CONSIDERATIONS OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN THE USA. WHAT MORALITY, WHAT LAW CAN JUSTIFY SUCH AN APPROACH BY THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT TO INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS? YOU CANNOT FIND SUCH A MORALITY AND SUCH A LAW, BECAUSE THE ACTIONS OF THE USA WITH REGARD TO CUBA ARE OUTRIGHT BANDITRY, OR, IF YOU LIKE, THE FOLLY OF DEGENERATE IMPERIALISM. UNFORTUNATELY, THE PEOPLE OF ALL COUNTRIES, AND AT LEAST OF ALL THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, CAN SUFFER GRAVELY FROM SUCH FOLLY, SINCE THE USA HAS FULLY LOST ITS FORMER INACCESSIBILITY WITH THE ADVENT OF CONTEMPORARY TYPES OF ARMAMENT.

CONSEQUENTLY, MR. PRESIDENT, IF YOU COOLLY WEIGH THE SITUATION WHICH HAS DEVELOPED, NOT GIVING WAY TO PASSIONS, THEN YOU WILL UNDERSTAND THAT THE SOVIET UNION CANNOT FAIL TO REJECT THE ARBITRARY DEMANDS OF THE USA. WHEN YOU CONFRONT US WITH SUCH CONDITIONS, TRY TO PUT YOURSELF IN OUR SITUATION AND THINK HOW THE USA WOULD REACT TO THESE CONDITIONS. I DO NOT DOUBT THAT IF SOMEONE HAD ATTEMPTED TO DICTATE CONDITIONS OF THIS SORT TO YOU, THE USA, YOU WOULD HAVE REJECTED SUCH AN ATTEMPT. AND WE ALSO SAY -- NO.

THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS THAT VIOLATION OF FREEDOM OF THE USE OF INTERNATIONAL WATERS AND INTERNATIONAL AIR SPACE IS AN ACT OF AGGRESSION, PUSHING MANKIND TOWARDS THE ABYSS OF A WORLD MISSILE-NUCLEAR WAR. CONSEQUENTLY, THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT CANNOT GIVE INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CAPTAINS OF SOVIET VESSELS BOUND FOR CUBA TO OBSERVE THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THE AMERICAN NAVAL FORCES BLOCKADING THAT ISLAND. YOUR INSTRUCTIONS TO SOVIET MARINERS ARE STRICTLY TO OBSERVE THE GENERALLY RECOGNIZED NORMS OF NAVIGATION IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS AND NOT TO RETREAT FROM THEM BY EVEN ONE STEP. AND IF THE AMERICAN SIDE VIOLATES THESE RULES, IT MUST REALIZE WHAT SORT OF RESPONSIBILITY WILL REST ON IT IN THAT CASE. OF COURSE, WE SHALL NOT BE SIMPLY OBSERVERS OF PIRATICAL ACTIONS OF

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ALL 1071, URGENT 10/24/62 FROM MOSCOW

AMERICAN SHIPS ON THE HIGH SEAS. WE WILL CONTINUE TO BE FORCED FOR OUR PART TO TAKE THE MEASURES WHICH WE DEEM NECESSARY AND ADEQUATE IN ORDER TO PROTECT OUR RIGHTS. FOR THIS WE HAVE ALL THAT IS NECESSARY.

ROBERTSON LIAISON OFFICE,

10/24/62. 10/24/62-000000

10/24/62

END

NOTE: RELAYED TO CIA, WHITE HOUSE, SECRETARY OF NAVY AND CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, TREASURY AND JUSTICE DEPARTMENT 10/24/62 PER 66.

NOTE: ADVANCE COPIES TO 66 10/24/62 DWT-M.

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